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HIGH ALBANIA AND ITS CUSTOMS IN 1908.

BY

M. EDITH DURHAM.

[WITH PLATE XXXI.]

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HIGH ALBANIA AND ITS CUSTOMS IN 1908.

BY M. EDITH DURHAM.

[WITH PLATE XXXI.]

HIGH ALBANIA is the large tract of mountain land which forms the north-west corner of Turkey in Europe. It is the only spot in Europe in which the tribal system has been preserved intact up to the present day and along with it a mass of very ancient customs. Changes are now sweeping rapidly over the Balkan peninsula, and it is with the hope of inducing someone better qualified than myself to go and investigate on the spot, before it is too late, that I will try and give an idea of the very primitive conditions which still prevail. Writing has, it appears, always been an art unknown to the tribesman, consequently he possesses an extraordinary memory, and has handed down quantities of oral traditions, most of which remain to be collected.

Life is very rough, but the dangers of travel in North Albania have been ridiculously exaggerated. In most places I was received with enthusiasm. Many districts did not remember having been visited by an Englishman, but had received a few Austrians or Germans; and a few had not admitted any foreigner at all for years. In such they only knew of the King of England vaguely, as one of the Seven Kings who are believed to squat in a circle and arrange the affairs of Europe. One of the seven is the King of France, and one, I believe, the King of Poland.

The Albanian tribesman does not call himself *Albanian*, but *Sheypetaar*, and his land *Sheypni*. He says he is the son of an eagle (*Sheypé*), and his land is the land of eagles. His language grammatically belongs to the so-called Aryan group, and he boasts and believes that he is the oldest thing in the Balkan peninsula—it was his before the coming of the Slav or Turk, and he hates each with a bitter Balkan hatred. There is, I believe, no valid reason for doubting that he is the more or less direct descendent of the ancient Illyrian tribes that dwelt in the land when we first have record of it. Roman, Slav, and Turk have in turn held the Balkan peninsula. But the mountain tribesman has never been more than nominally conquered—and is still unsubdued. Empires pass over him and run off like water from a duck's back.

When I arrived in Scutari, Albania, the capital, travelling in the mountains was strictly forbidden by the Turkish Government, as the tribes were in almost

open revolt. But as I knew the people and had good introductions, I took French leave, sneaked out of the town in the grey before dawn, dodged the gendarmerie outposts, and was soon safely away in very light marching order.

I visited in all some twenty-four tribes, and in many was lucky enough to get a detailed account of the tribe's origin.

These tribes are divided into several marked groups. The first group I visited was *Maltsia e madhe*, the Great Mountainous Land. This consists of five large tribes and three small ones. Four of the five large ones each tells that its ancestor came from the north with his family, thirteen or fourteen generations ago, flying from the advancing Turks. In some cases they found uninhabited land and settled on it. In others, they fought with the men already on the land, and finally settled among them. These former inhabitants they call *Anas*, which is interpreted in the latest Albanian Dictionary as "aborigines." They tell that the *Anas* were very strong and active, could leap over six horses and ate acorns and horseflesh.

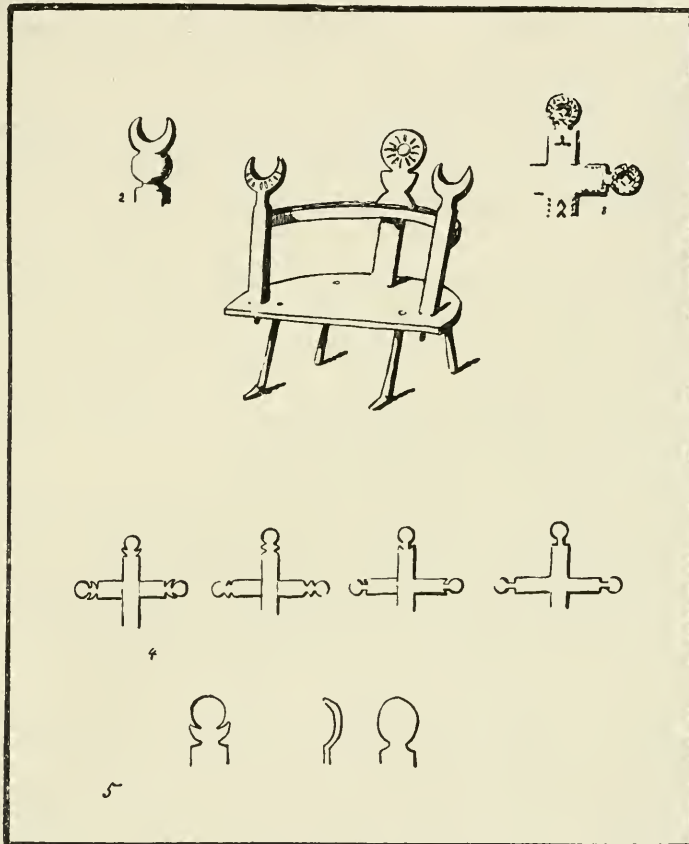
They intermarried with the *Anas*. A few houses in the Hoti tribe still trace direct descent from the *Anas*, in the male line. All four of these tribes (Skreli Hoti, Gruda, Kilmeni) tell that their ancestors came from Bosnia or the Herzegovina, precise district unknown.

An approximate date for the coming of these immigrants is the founding of the church of Gruda, three hundred and eighty years ago, so they say. Some of the tribes say they came rather before, and some rather after, this event. This gives the date 1528. History shows that, roughly speaking, the tradition is probably correct, for the Turks killed the last King of Bosnia in 1463, spread gradually over the land, and finally incorporated all Bosnia and Herzegovina in the Turkish Empire about 1590. The shifting of the peoples falls well within this period (1463–1590).

The family, a communal of perhaps sixty or seventy members—such exist still to-day—would march slowly, rarely more than fifteen miles a day, and would be long on the way, the women carrying the burdens and driving the flocks. There would be an armed bodyguard of twenty or thirty fighting men, for at fifteen a tribesman is a fighting man, and often carries arms, and is no mean foe at twelve.

Many of the neighbouring tribes of Montenegro tell precisely the same tale—namely, that their ancestors fled from the Turks thirteen or fourteen generations ago. Moreover, certain tribes of *Maltsia e madhe* and Montenegro actually acknowledge blood-relationship, and trace descent from a common forefather. I am very strongly inclined to believe that the present language and nationality of such tribes—that is, whether to-day they are Serbophone and Montenegrin, or Albanophone and Albanian—has been determined mainly by whether they came under the influence of the Orthodox Servian Church or of the Roman Catholic Church. There is some evidence to show that the people who came down from the north were neither Orthodox nor Catholic, but belonged to the heretical

Bogomil sect, which was wide spread in the Balkan peninsula in the Middle Ages. I was extremely interested to find that the *Maltsia e madhe* tribes, more especially the two, *Skreli* and *Hoti*, which say they come from Bosnia, the stronghold of Bogomilism, are freely tattooed on the hand, arm and sometimes breast, with designs that I at once recognised as common in certain parts of Bosnia, notably around *Jaice*, the old capital, where the last king was slain, and in these designs the sun and the crescent moon are almost always factors.



SUN AND MOON. N. ALBANIA.

Bogomilism was a form of Manicheeism, and in Manicheeism the sun and moon play a most important part. The Christian married women of *Maltsia e madhe* wear a crescent of silver filagree or of gold braid on their caps. They vow and declare that this has nothing to do with the Turk: "It is our custom. We have always done it."

You cannot live long with the up-country tribesman without finding that the religion he professes is the merest surface veneer. He is guided for the most part by mysterious superstitions and beliefs hidden in the recesses of his soul, and he cares no jot for priest or *hodja* when their teaching runs counter to his own

Albanian ideas as to the fitness of things. He is a thorn in the side of all his spiritual pastors. He has often been execrated for the rapidity with which he will change his religion. Whole districts have been known to turn Moslem suddenly, in order to score off a priest who has offended them. Nor do they become good Moslems. I have lived with Moslem tribesmen all night and all day, but I have never seen one pray or perform the ceremonial ablutions; and his women are all unveiled. So long as he is allowed to go on being Albanian in his own way the tribesman will assume any faith that is convenient. Islam lets him have his own way, consequently Islam is spreading. In some transition districts (*e.g.*, Luria) people will go both to mosque and to church. If they don't get what they want from one they try the other.

To get at the real beliefs of either Moslem or Christian is most difficult, but I have it, on what I believe is very reliable authority, that many of the so-called Christians will admit to a belief in two conflicting powers of light and darkness, and also that the sun and moon, with which they tattoo, have something to do with this.

Twice during heavy thunderstorms I was told by my men that Kulshedra and Drangue (*Drangoni*) were fighting. Kulshedra is a female monster that strives to destroy humanity with torrents and tempests, and Drangoni is a male being who beats her back. Men and male animals can become Drangonis, and women, serpents, and other noxious creatures Kulshedras. The tribesman has an intense belief in the innate depravity of all things feminine.

Fasting was much practised by the Bogomils, and the keeping of fasts most rigidly is the only law of the Catholic Church which the people strictly observe. These facts all point to lingering belief in a form of Manicheism.

The second tribal group I visited was the *Pulati* group, called also *Maltsia e vogel*, the small mountainous land. Here also a tale of immigration is told by the more important tribes, but of immigration, not from the north, but from the east, the district known in earlier days as Rashia. These people tell that they arrived before the *Maltsia e madhe* people did. As the Turks penetrated Rashia considerably before they subdued Bosnia, this tale also is probably true. They too tell that they found previous inhabitants who were a small dark people. In the tribe of Shala there are still eight houses that trace descent from these early inhabitants. The other families migrated in a body "a long time ago" to the neighbourhood of Dechani (probably at the end of the seventeenth century, when the Serbs left it in numbers and fled to Hungary). I remember, when at Dechani in 1903, being greatly struck with the small very dark Albanians there, for I had previously known only the fair type. There was fighting going on with the Turkish troops not far off, and the country was reckoned in a dangerous state, and a lot of these little dark men kindly came and formed an armed escort for me when I went for a walk. Shoshi, the neighbour tribe to Shala, and consanguineous with it, tells the same tale, but here the small dark people have been wholly absorbed. They have, however, left their mark throughout *Pulati*, where the number of small dark people largely exceeds that in *Maltsia e madhe*.

The typical fair man, common in *Maltsia e madhe* and found in all the other districts, is a rather tall man with a yellow moustache, a fine cut aquiline nose and a long strong jaw. His eyes are grey or even quite blue. The bridge of his nose is narrow and his eyebrows slope downwards, often markedly so. His skin, where not sunburnt, is white. He is often a really fine animal, and very well aware of the fact.

The small dark man is insignificant in appearance, and usually an ugly little fellow. His eyes are brown, his hair grows low on his forehead. Sometimes a hairy line extends along the temple to the outer corner of the eyebrow, giving him an oddly monkey-like look. His skin is olive.

Between these two types there are, of course, any amount of links. The type which the Albanian himself considers Albanian is the fair aquiline type. From the high Albanian mountains right down to the Greek frontier the Albanian tells you "We are a fair people." And as he has never been worried by theories of dark and fair races, perhaps he knows.

The question, as to what these dark and fair races are, is a very difficult one and I do not think my theories on the subject are of any value; so I will only give the statements of the people themselves and say that, roughly speaking, I found the high Albanian tribes fall into three groups:—I. *Maltsia e madhe*, which tells of a large immigration from the north, and intermarriage with previous inhabitants; II. *Pulati*, with a tale of immigration from the east and similar intermarriage; and III. A group of tribes which tells of no immigration, and boasts that it has always been on the spot. This includes the *Puka* group, or part of it. The *Berisha* and *Merturi* men, who belong to this, vow that they have been there for ever. They also say that the Albanian is a fair man. It is noteworthy that in the districts where such a tale is told the place-names are all Albanian, save a few that appear to be Latin. In *Maltsia e madhe*, on the other hand, there are many Slavonic place-names.

An accident quite prevented my going to *Merturi*, but I visited the *Berisha* men, a most lively lot—the only ones that very nearly greeted me with bullets. But that was because I came with men who happened to be "in blood" with them. I vainly tried to kodak them as they dashed from cover to cover, howling like hell-hounds, and aiming at my men with their rifles. It was "touch and go," but they were very sorry afterwards, and we became great friends. They brought me offerings of honey and *rakia* and begged me to stay at least a year, and I spent a week with them. These up-country tribesmen, who have rarely seen a foreigner (*Berisha* remembered one British consul and two Austrians), are very childlike, and change from one mood to another all in a minute. *Berisha*, so far as I saw, was mixed dark and fair, with a large proportion of dark.

Berisha and *Merturi* are important tribes, for they have overflowed and sent branches in many directions. The *Merturi* founded the town of *Djakova* about 400 years ago, and it is noteworthy that all the *Djakova* men that I met who claimed descent from *Merturi* were fair.

Customs differ somewhat in these various groups. The Maltsia e madhe group is by far the most tattooed. It is also the fairest group. The darker Pulati people are very much less tattooed. We may perhaps deduce from this that the fair immigrant tattooed and the dark native did not. All through the tribes, whether dark or fair, I found the sun and moon symbols in one form or another.

I will now pass on to some tribal customs.

A *fis* or tribe in Albania consists of one or more *bariaks*, that is, groups of men that fight under one standard. Only one of these standards now bears a special tribe mark so far as I have learnt—that of the Mirdites of Oroshi, which has a rayed sun.

In some tribes all the *bariaks* trace descent from a common male ancestor, and the divisions have only been made for convenience when the tribe grew large. In other cases certain *bariaks* are of other blood, and have been adopted into the tribe for various reasons.

The tribes are strictly exogamous. That is, they invariably take wives from outside the tribe, excepting only when a *bariak* within it is of different blood. Male blood only counts. (In a few cases it has been decided by a tribe that certain *bariaks*, though of common origin, are now sufficiently removed to be intermarriageable. But these are exceptions.) The rule is so strict that even tribes who trace origin from several brothers will not intermarry. Thus Shalah, Shoshi, and Mirdita are not intermarriageable. All descendants of a common male ancestor rank as brothers and sisters, and their union is looked on as incestuous and in the highest degree horrible. The offspring, I was repeatedly told, would be blind, deaf, dumb, deformed—all kinds of misfortunes would befall. There would be a curse on such a union, "for truly they are brothers and sisters, and it is forbidden to marry one's own blood." An exceptionally intelligent old Hoti man, a great authority on tribe law, when I asked how many generations must pass before Hoti could marry within the tribe, replied that "he hoped it would never be, for that even after a thousand years the blood will still be that of Geg Laz (the tribe's forefather), and they would still be brothers and sisters, and to marry your sister is a great sin." So deeply rooted is the feeling that in all my eight months of wandering I heard of only one instance in which the law was broken. A girl eloped with a distant cousin on her father's side. He was far enough removed for the Roman Church to marry them. But it was incest in the eyes of the outraged family. The luckless couple fled to another tribe for shelter, but were hunted down. The bridegroom was shot within the year, as was also his brother, who had aided the elopement and the bride's life was only saved by the intervention of the Franciscans. Tribe law is stern and merciless.

Female blood does not count at all among the Moslem tribes, nor did it till quite recently among the Christians. Now the priests strive and partially succeed in enforcing the Canon Law that prohibits the marriage of cousins to the sixth degree on both sides. Pope Clement VII, whose mother was an Albanian, sent the Archbishop of Antivari as Visitator Apostolicus to the Albanian mountains in

1702. His report is a bitter lament. All the tribes, he says, are given over to pagan practices. "Among the execrable customs of the mountain people, the wretched parents are in the habit of buying young girls for a price for their sons who are of tender age, and of keeping them in their houses till of age to cohabit, and of omitting to contract matrimony unless a male child be born, even after fifteen years of sinful cohabitation." This shows that the Church then had no control over the marriages, and the custom of not marrying legally till a male is born is not yet extinct.

As it has been the almost universal practice to take a wife from the tribe next door and to marry the resultant daughters back into it (unless of course the tribe be one that is consanguineous), it follows that certain tribes must be very closely inbred on the female side. So far as I could learn among the Moslems two tribes will go on exchanging daughters backwards and forwards for generations (I ascribe to this practice the very marked type of the Moslem tribes); and it has only recently been checked among the Christians. But the people declare that such tribes are in no way related—have not one drop of the same blood. I said a child had some of its mother's blood, but they said, "No, only the father's."

The people all know most exact lists of their relatives on the male side. The fact that I could not enumerate my paternal cousins beyond second cousins was reckoned as a proof of the barbarous state of English society. "Just like dogs or cattle." In fact, many of our habits, about which they perpetually questioned me, filled them with contempt or disgust, and they explained the superiority of their own.

Whatever may have been the origin of marrying outside the tribe it does not now at all depend on the fact, often noticed, that close living together tends to bring about prohibitory marriage laws, for tribe land is extensive, tracks very bad, and houses many hours distant apart.

It seemed incredible to me that tribe law should be so strong that, say, twelfth cousins should never desire to marry one another. In practice, however, they are rarely given the chance. All marriages are arranged by the elders, usually before the parties have reached maturity, and in a very large number of cases they are married before they have had time to make a choice. Marriage is entirely by purchase, except for the occasional forcible capture of a girl. Just before I went to Thethi, a *bariak* of the Christian tribe of Shala, they had had the effrontery to seize a Christian girl of Scutari when gathering sticks just outside the town and carry her off. Such however were her terror and misery that the local Franciscan induced them to release her unharmed. A girl was stolen too while I was in Skreli and supposed to have been sold to the Moslems of Krasnichi.

Most of the children are betrothed in infancy or in early childhood. Some even before birth. A man, so soon as a son is born to him, seeks a suitable family with which to be allied, and should there be no daughter available, bespeaks the next one born. He often pays down part of the price as soon as she is born, and

the balance later when she is handed over. The price in the richer tribes is from sixteen to twenty napoleons; in the poorer ones from ten to sixteen. It may be paid in money or its equivalent. A man too poor for anything better can swap an old rifle for an elderly childless widow.

Girls are married as young as thirteen and boys at fifteen, or even fourteen. But the age is rising. I found the more intelligent heads of houses in *Maltsia e madhe* objected to giving a girl under sixteen or allowing a youth under eighteen to have a wife, unless an extra woman was needed for the housework, in which case they said they would give a wife to a boy of sixteen. In such a case as this it is not unusual to give a boy a wife very much older than himself, possibly a widow, a strong full grown widow being needed. I met one case in which a boy of fifteen was married to a woman of twenty-five. Husband and wife had rarely or never seen one another previous to marriage. I never heard of a case in which a youth refused the bride provided for him. When I remarked on this, people said: "Why should he? A woman is a woman; God has made them all alike." Of the girls they said cheerfully, "Oh! they get used to it after a week or two." Such a thing as romantic affection appears to exist but rarely.

A girl can escape the husband to whom she has been sold in one way only. Should she resolutely refuse to be married to him she may, by tribe law, swear perpetual virginity before twelve witnesses, and she is then free and has certain privileges. In *Maltsia e madhe* she can inherit her father's land should he leave no son. From her it passes to the nearest heir male. She may dress as a man and carry arms, and often does so; she may also take blood vengeance as a man does: but this is seldom done, I believe.

Among the other tribes she cannot inherit land, which passes straight to the next heir male. He however must pay her yearly out of the estate 300 *okas* (about 650 lbs.) of maize, 18 *okas* of rakia, and 30 *okas* of wine. Should he fail to do so she can enforce payment by an appeal to the Council of Elders. Among these tribes I saw no virgins who wore male attire, and was told it was not customary. In *Maltsia e madhe* I met several. This practice of swearing virginity to avoid marriage with a man disliked prevails, I am told, among the Moslem as well as the Christian tribes. But I met no examples. I heard of one who had served in the Turkish army.

In all parts a sworn virgin is allowed to eat with the men and is treated as an equal, exchanges tobacco, and is generally "Hail! fellow, well met," in striking contrast to the position of a married woman.

No tribesman eats with his wife; and the odd custom still prevails of a married couple never addressing each other by name. To eat with a woman seems to be thought very degrading. The men eat first and the women eat up the bits left over afterwards at the other end of the room, or, if Moslems, in their own quarters.

I was always treated with great honour and classed with the buck-herd. No woman was allowed to eat with me in a tribesman's house. I ate with the men,

but as they had to draw the line somewhere, they often helped my horse-boy first. Sometimes they would not even let a woman speak to me. They are tremendous talkers, and found a foreign female far too amusing to be wasted on their women. They also seemed to have an idea that as I am unmarried I belonged to the sworn-virgin class and was fit to be associated with. Moreover both Albanians and Montenegrins have a proverb which says "Long hair, short wits—a woman's head!" and being a simple-minded folk they jump to the conclusion that the converse holds good, and credit me with extraordinary intellectual power. This landed me often in very difficult positions, as the political situation was strained almost to breaking point, and I was called in to advise.

Among the Moslems I had to live night and day in the men's quarters, and even in the great chieftain's house of the Christian Mirdites no woman was allowed to come near me. I did not even see one, though I heard them scuffling behind the door to get a squint at me, but the men chivied them.

An Albanian tribesman, whether Christian or Moslem, has but one wife at a time, unless he choose to take as well his brother's widow. This by tribe law he may do one month after her husband's death. As all men of a tribe rank as brothers, it follows that a man may take his cousin's or uncle's widow, or both, should there be no nearer male relative than himself surviving. I heard of a case at Thethi in which a man had taken his uncle's and his cousin's widows, and wished to add a third and legal wife to his household—which caused conflict with the priest. This custom prevails everywhere except in *Maltsia e madhe*, where if it ever did exist (which I failed to learn) it has now been extinct long enough to be considered incestuous, and I had dinner with some men who had recently shot their brother-in-law for indulging in it.

In Nikaj, an outlying Christian tribe rarely visited by foreigners, this custom is rampant, in spite of the frequent excommunication of guilty parties by the Franciscan mission-priest. Here and in several other places, as hell-fire was not enough to terrify them, I was asked to threaten them with the wrath of King Edward VII. I tried hard to learn the people's reason for this practice. When there is no child, and the husband has been shot very soon after marriage, there is no doubt that the idea is to beget a child that is to rank as his. Children so produced are still reckoned by many people as the actual offspring of the dead man, in spite of the Franciscans, who study medical works, and gravely assure their flocks that the thing is impossible.

Where children already exist, the arrangement is largely one of convenience. The woman must remain in the house to bring up the children. If there be an unmarried brother in the house he can thus obtain a wife without paying for her—a great consideration in a poor family; also as one young man explained very earnestly the woman is to be considered. He was excommunicated, and so was all his communal household (eighteen persons), because of his relations with his cousin's widow. He said, "She has three children, so she must stay with us to bring them up, and so of course she cannot marry again." (It would be contrary

to all tribe law to bring a strange man into the house.) "But she is only twenty-four, and to force her to live a single life would be very wrong. That is why I have taken her. I have a wife already, so I do not need her. I am sorry I am excommunicated, but I am an honourable man and I must act rightly to my cousin's widow."

A childless widow in Maltsia e madhe reverts to her own family, which can sell her again, and generally does so at once. In other tribes the husband's family has the right of keeping her. If they decide to sell they divide the price obtained with her own family.

A widow long married and childless is of slight value, as probably incapable of child-bearing. A young healthy widow, married but a few months, is on the other hand snapped up at once, and often fetches a higher price than a maiden.

There is a dearth of women in High Albania. The people declare that it is because God knows that many men will be shot, and so provides an extra supply. I believe myself that one of the reasons is, that owing to the very young age at which girls are married, there is a cruelly high death-rate in child bearing. But in some of the tribes where church registers of baptisms and deaths have now been carefully kept for some years it really appears that a considerable excess of males is born and reaches maturity. Then the male death rate from gunshot wounds is high and thins them off a bit.

Life among the outlying Christian tribes is so primitive that I doubt if I can make it understood. The communal family lives in a *kula*, a great stone tower two or three storeys high. It has no windows, only loopholes for rifles. It is often perched on a rock for better defence. The ground floor is a pitch-dark stable. The entrance to the dwelling is by a flight of stone steps to the first floor. An awful stench grips your throat. In pitch darkness you climb a wooden ladder to the living room up under the stone roof on which the sun blazes, making it as hot as a furnace. Thirty or forty human beings of all ages and both sexes are here crowded together. Here they are born and die, and here they bring their new bought brides without any kind of privacy whatsoever. The house is ruled by the *Xoti i shpis*, the house-lord, and all the household obey him like dogs. If you ask why, they will tell you it is because he is the head—the right to rule is in his branch of the family—God made him head—if he is head of course you must obey. In some cases he still has power of life and death over his subjects.

The house is often filthy beyond all words. Though the painted chests ranged round the walls may be full of fine embroidered clothes for festivals, and silver-mounted pistols hang on the walls, the people are clad in dirty rags on which the lice crawl calmly. The little children are often naked. The axe-hewn planks of the floor (made by cutting down a tree and then chopping all of it away till a plank of the right size is obtained) are caked with dirt and saliva. Two sheep or goats are tethered in a corner, fetlock deep in dung. They bring luck to the house and promote its fertility. You sit on this floor or on a log. If there be a chair it is the throne of the house-lord and, especially in Shala and Shoshi, is possibly

adorned with a carved sun at the back, and a crescent moon on either arm. Through the floor rises the hot reek of ammonia from the stables, and you are scarcely seated before a black cloud of buzzing flies settles on you. The house-lord entertains you with elaborate ceremony. He makes the coffee himself. It is an insult to offer a guest coffee made by a woman. And above all things the house-lord is a gentleman according to his lights. He offers you "bread and salt and my heart" (*buk e kryje e zemer t'emen*), which takes the form of rank sheep-cheese and *rakia* distilled from his own grapes. There are endless healths to be drunk, between each of which a bit of cheese is eaten. The *rakia* keeps down the cheese, and the cheese tames the *rakia*. If you are not prepared to undergo this ordeal do not enter a *kula*, for you will give dire offence. Hospitality is the law of the mountains, and the house-lord freely gives you of his best.

Amulets are freely worn to keep off the evil eye (*Syy i kee*). Albania swarms with devils and spirits (*Ore*), magicians and witches (*Shtriga*). Women in Albania are all born wicked. In some districts probably quite half the women have dealings with the devil. But it is very hard to detect them. *Shtrigas* can work many wonders, bewitch a man so that he withers and dies, or suffers aches and pains. A *Shtriga* can make herself quite small like a bee, and get into a house through the keyhole or under the door at night and suck a person's blood so that he fades and dies in time. The best safeguard is hard to get. A *Shtriga* always vomits the blood she has sucked. You must secretly track a woman you suspect to be a *Shtriga* when she goes out to vomit the blood. You must scrape some of it up on a silver coin and wear it, and then no *Shtriga* can harm you.

Nothing is too marvellous for a tribesman to believe. Here is a good example, which the teller, a man from Djakova, believes most firmly. A young married woman who was pregnant craved for wine, but the family was too poor to buy any. Her mother-in-law, who was a *Shtriga*, stripped the young wife quite naked and anointed her all over with a salve which she made, at the same time saying certain magic words. The young wife at once shrank to the size of a bee. "Go, my daughter" said the *Shtriga*, "to the cellar of old so-and-so, crawl in at the keyhole and drink all you want. But take care not to say the name of God." Off went the young wife to the cellar, entered and drank her fill. She then felt so much better that she cried "Thank God!" At once she became her natural size. "Oh what a dreadful position for a virtuous married woman," cried my informant with deep feeling, "to be in a strange cellar with nothing on at all!" There she had to stay till the owner of the cellar opened it next day. He was much surprised to find her, but as he was a very kind man, he lent her a coat to go home in and never doubted her explanation. And the Djakovan who told the tale knew the woman, knew the owner of the cellar, and had seen the keyhole. What more proof can you require? Moreover, as he remarked, how else can you explain the occurrence?

I saw a Moslem man who knew how to summon devils by hopping on one leg and waving the other behind him. But I was with Christian tribesmen, and such

was their terror that he would cast a spell upon me that they would not allow him to come within a hundred yards of me, much less let me see him perform.

When a child is born you should break an egg over its face to keep off the evil eye; and when a house is built you must kill a cock or a lamb and sprinkle the blood on the foundations. These two customs are still practised at Scutari, and the old fortress on the hill is one of the places, in the foundations of which a woman is said to have been built in the Middle Ages as an offering to the devils that destroyed it as fast as it was built.

At night in Albania the tracks are often infested with devils who take the form of flashes of fire, and no matter how well a man may know the way he cannot go on till the first cock crows and the devils disappear. A man I know who has been bothered in this way says it is no use to do anything but cross yourself and wait patiently for cockerow.

Save for an iron pot or two brought from Scutari, and the coffee cups, everything used in the *kula* is home made. The bowls, spoons, and troughs are hacked rudely from lumps of wood. The clothes are home spun and home woven. The woollen stuff (*shiak*) is measured by the *Kuut*—the length of the forearm; the *Perehik*—that is the stretch of the thumb and index finger; the *Shplak*—the breadth of four fingers; and the *Plam*—the stretch of the thumb and little finger. Land is measured by the *Ar*, as much, that is, as two oxen can plough in a whole day. *Ar* appears to be connected with the Latin *arare*. The Albanian for a plough is *parmen*, and to plough is *me livrue*.

Distance is measured by the hour only, and corn by the horse (*kal*), *i.e.*, horseload. Riches are flocks and corn and weapons. No tribesman has much in corn. Maize and milk are staple diet. Meat on feast days when people eat like boa constrictors.

The tribes are all self-governing. The amount of independence they enjoy, and whether or not they pay fines or tribute to the Turkish Government, depends upon their fighting power and the more or less inaccessibility of the tribe land.

Tribe government is by a council (*Medjliss*) of elders. This varies in number according to the importance of the business in hand. In Maltsia e madhe a full council to deal with matters concerning the whole tribe consists of the *Bariaktar* (hereditary standard bearer), two *Voyvodas*, twelve elders specially chosen for their knowledge of tribe law, and seventy-two heads of houses. The term *Voyvoda* is a Slavonic one, and does not occur in the other districts. Among the other tribes a full council consists of the *Bariaktar* and the heads of all the chief houses. In certain districts, notably Shala and Shoshi, an active radical party has sprung up lately called the *Diclmnii* (youth), which has elected its own head and refused to recognise the hereditary right in council of the *Bariaktar*. These new councils have passed some good modifications of tribe laws, and managed to enforce them.

The law of the mountains is known as the Canon of Lek Dukaghin. He was one of a chieftain family that ruled all Pulati, Puka, Mirdita, Luria, and Ljuma in the middle ages, and down to the taking of Scutari in 1479 by the Turks. Lek

(Alexander), whose identity cannot be determined—there were several of the name and a mass of conflicting tradition—is regarded by the tribesmen with extraordinary awe. He is said to have come from Rashia with the ancestors of Shala, Shoshi, and Mirdita, and the present ruling family of Mirdita, now represented by Prenk Bib Doda, claims to be of Dukaghin blood. The tribes that were ruled by the Dukaghins still call themselves Dukaghini.

To Lek these tribesmen ascribe every law, almost every custom and habit that they have. That the bulk of the laws are, however, very much earlier than Lek's time is obvious. I am inclined to believe that the penalties chiefly are his.

To the tribesmen, however, all the so-called laws of Lek are as divine decrees; and especially does he believe that Lek ordered blood vengeance. Into the complicated rules of blood I have not space to enter. They dominate the whole life of the tribesman. Everything turns on *ghak* (blood). I have discussed it endlessly—for the family blood feud is the main topic of conversation—and collected a mass of cases.

It is usual for writers who do not know him to denounce the tribesman as a vulgar murderer, who kills wantonly for the sake of killing. But in order to understand a custom one must see it through native eyes. After living some eight months among blood-hunters, I perceived what *ghak* meant to them. It is not so much a punishment which they inflict, as an act performed for self purification, and as such a solemn and necessary act. For there are certain offences that blacken, not merely the honour of the man against whom they have been committed, but blacken also the honour of his whole house and even of his tribe. Only blood can cleanse the stain. And the man whose honour is blackened is obsessed with the idea of his own impurity. It gives him no rest. Blood he must have. In all the outlying tribes in which the blood laws are quite unmodified, male blood of the offender's house, even of a quite distant cousin, suffices; or if the affair be intertribal, blood of the offender's tribe. In such cases an absolutely innocent man who is ignorant of the cause of offence may be sacrificed; and his blood cleanses the other's honour, who, triumphant, announces his deed. He is now in turn liable to be shot, and should he have slain a man of his own tribe, by tribe law his house will be burnt, his corn burnt, and in some districts his trees felled and his cattle slaughtered too. But all this is of but small moment. His honour is clean, and if he must die he dies happy.

A man of the Christian tribe of Nikaj who was seeking blood was exhorted by the Franciscan to desist, and threatened with the torments of hell. "I would rather clean my honour and go to hell," he replied, and went out to slay. He slew, but was himself mortally wounded. The Franciscan hastened to the spot, and begged him to confess and repent while yet there was time. The dying man said, "I do not want your absolution or your heaven, for I have cleaned my honour." And he died.

We may regret that "his honour rooted in dishonour stood"; but there is a tragic grandeur about the man who is ready to sacrifice all he has, all that he

holds dear, and even life itself, in order that he may do that which he believes to be right. It is not every one that is prepared so to act up to his ideals.

When you meet a tribesman and he drinks to you, *Tu ngbiat tjetër* (long life to thee), remember to drink *Tu ngbiat me neers* (long honour to thee) in return; for honour is better than life—in Albania.

APPENDIX.

TABLE OF THE TRIBES OF NORTH ALBANIA.

Maltsia e Madhe Group. (Great Mountain Land.)

I. *Gruda*.—A tribe of one *bariak*, situated between the River Tsem and the Montenegrin frontier. North of it is the Kuchi tribe (Montenegro), and south the Hoti. Gruda consists of about 500 houses (a house is vaguely reckoned in *Maltsia e madhe* as eight or ten persons). Of these eighty trace descent from Berisha (see below), and the remainder, who are called Gell (? *Djell*), are immigrants from the Herzegovina. They state that the church of Gruda was built 380 years ago, shortly after their arrival. Gruda is now about half Moslem and half Catholic. The Berisha and Djell stocks are intermarriageable.

II. *Hoti*.—A large tribe situate south of Gruda and extending to the shore of Scutari Lake. On the east it is divided from Kastrati by the Licheni Hotit, an arm of the lake. It consists of one *bariak* of about 500 houses. All are Catholic but three, those of the Bariaktar's family. This turned Moslem seven generations ago. All Hoti, except twelve houses, traces descent from Bosnia. These twelve are called Anas, and are of unknown origin. They were there when Hoti came.

Shortly after the building of the church of Gruda, thirteen generations ago, Geg Laz, the ancestor of Hoti, arrived with his family. Geg was one of four brothers. The others were Piper, Vaso, and Krasni. From these descend the Piperi and the Vasojevichi of Montenegro, who are Serbophone and belong to the Orthodox Church. Krasni is ancestor of the Krasnichi, now Moslem and Albano-phone (see below). Hoti is consanguineous also with half the Triepshi tribe, which branched from it later, and reckons consanguinity also with part of Nikaj because it branched from Krasnich, which is consanguineous. Marriage is, therefore, prohibited with all these. Hoti intermarries with the Anas, but mainly marries with Kastrati.

III. *Kastrati*.—Consisting also of about 500 houses, lies between the Licheni Hotit and the Skreli tribe. 300 houses trace descent from one Delti or Dedli, who came with his seven sons from the *bariak* of Drekalovich of the Kuchi. This in turn traces origin from Berisha (see below). The other 200 houses trace from people already on the spot when Delti arrived. They are said to have been Slavs. All are now Albanophone and the majority Catholic, the rest Moslems.

IV. *Skreli* is situated in the valley of the Proni Thaat. It is mainly Catholic, and traces its origin from Bosnia. It is one *bariak*.

V. *Kilmeni*.—A very widely-spread tribe of four *bariaks*—Seltze, Vukli, Boga, and Nikshi. These descend each from one of the four sons of Kilmeni, the ancestor of the tribe. He arrived in the land about thirteen generations ago. Nevertheless, these four *bariaks* are now considered sufficiently far removed to be intermarriageable, and marry freely. This is exceptional. Kilmeni came vaguely "from the north." Seltze (300 houses, all Catholic) lies at the head of the valley of the Tsem Seltzit, one of the sources of the Tsem. The majority of the houses, Djenovich Seltze, descend from Kilmeni. The rest, Rabijenovich Seltze, are of other stock, some say from near Rijeka in Montenegro.

Vukli lies at Tsem's other source, Tsem Vuklit. It is ninety-four families (number of persons to a family unknown), all Catholic.

Boga lies at the source of the Proni Thaat. It is seventy-five families, almost all Catholic.

Nikshi (154 houses, almost entirely Moslem) lies between Vukli and Boga.

Kilmeni is migratory. It descends in large numbers to the plains near Alessio to pasture flocks in the winter, and returns to the mountains for summer. It has thrown out branches in several other districts (see below).

VI. *Lohe* (or *Lohja*).—A small tribe of one *bariak*, consisting of eighty Moslem and forty Catholic houses.

VII. *Rechi*, also small, and mostly Moslem. Rechi and Lohe are said to be of mixed origin from Shlaku and Pulati. Probably overflows of those districts.

VIII. *Rioli*, small Christian tribe. I passed through quickly, and did not learn its origin.

These three all lie between Skreli and Pulati, and the whole eight form the Maltsia e madhe group, and are included in the diocese of Scutari.

It is noteworthy that there is a sprinkling of Slavonic names throughout Maltsia e madhe.

On the shore of the Lake of Scutari, north of Scutari, is a small Moslem tribe, Kopliku, and between it and Lohe the small Moslem tribe Grizhi. Between Kopliku and Scutari is the orthodox Serbophone village of Vranka, the only Serbophone district in Albania. It is of mixed descent from refugees from Bosnia and Montenegro, who fled from blood. It reckons about 1,000 souls.

Pulati Group.

Pulati is difficult to define, as its ecclesiastical limits (the diocese of Pulati) extend farther than the tribes actually called Pulati by the people. Lower Pulati, or Pulati proper, includes four tribes.

I. *Ghoanni*.—A small Catholic tribe of one *bariak*.

II. *Plani*.—A Catholic tribe of one *bariak*, tracing origin from three stocks which are intermarriageable. One descends from Kilmeni (*q.v.*).

III. *Mgula*.—Small Catholic tribe, one *bariak*.

IV. *Kiri*.—Catholic tribe of one *bariak*.

The other tribes included in the diocese of Pulati are :—

V. *Shala*.—This is a very large and extensive tribe, occupying all the upper part of the valley of the River Shala, and reaching to the summits of the mountains that form the watershed on either side. Shala consists of four *bariaks*, Thethi, Petsaj, Lothaj, and Lekaj. All descend from a common ancestor. Three brothers are reported to have fled from Rashia when it was overrun by the Turks (this would be at the end of the fourteenth or beginning of the fifteenth century). One had a saddle (*Shala*), the other a winnowing sieve (*Shosh*), and the third nothing; so he said *Mir dit* (good-day) and went off. This is the legendary origin of Shala, Shoshi, and Mirdita. They still reckon that they are too nearly related to be intermarriageable. The *bariak* Thethi occupies the head of the valley. It consists of 180 houses, all Catholic. (A house in all Pulati averages many more inmates than in Maltsia e madhe, as the custom of large communal families prevails. There may be as many as forty, or even more.) Thethi is self-governing, and is almost independent of the rest of Shala. Petsaj, Lothaj, and Lekaj are said to have separated into three main houses 376 years ago. They are now *bariaks*. Lothaj and Lekaj have quite recently decided that they are far enough removed to be intermarriageable. Thethi and Petsaj will not intermarry within the tribe. Shala tells that, when it arrived in the land, there were already small dark people inhabiting it. With these they intermarried. Eight houses near Abate, lower Shala, trace origin from these earlier folk. The rest of them emigrated to Dechani. Shala is entirely Catholic.

VI. *Shoshi*.—Origin as above. It lies south of Shala on the right bank of the Shala River.

VII. *Toplana*.—Is a small Catholic tribe of one *bariak* lying east of Shoshi. It is in a very wild district, and has the highest death-rate from gunshot wounds of all the Christian tribes. It tells that it is very old.

The whole district occupied by the above tribes is called Maltsia e vogel, the Little Mountain Land. Also included in the diocese of Pulati is:

VIII. *Nikaj*.—This is an offshoot from the Moslem tribe of Krasnich (brother to Hoti, *q.v.*). Its ancestor Nikol left Krasnich while Krasnich was yet Christian. (Catholic or Orthodox?). One hundred houses of Nikaj, the Tsuraj, trace descent from a daughter of Nikol who bore an illegitimate son by a gypsy which Nikol adopted. This is the only case of female descent I heard of. Nikaj is all Catholic. It is one of the wildest and most poverty-stricken of the tribes.

Puka Group.

Puka is a very large tribe of seven *bariaks* :—

Puka.—All Moslem. *Cheriti*.—Part Catholic, part Moslem. *Chiri*.—All Catholic. *Dushaj* (?)—All Catholic. *Komani*.—Catholic. *Kabashi*.—Moslem. And *Berisha* with *Merturit-Gurit*, all Christian. These two last are entirely Catholic. They tell no tale of immigration, but claim to be among the very oldest inhabitants. (See Gruda *ante*.)

Postripa Group.

Mazreku.—A small Catholic tribe on the Drin, east of Scutari.

Drishti.—All Moslem, small tribe.

Shlaku.—Tribe of one *bariak*, on right bank of Drin, all Catholic. Traces origin from Toplana (*q.v.*).

Dushmani.—A Catholic tribe of two *bariaks*:—Dushmani (160 houses) and Temali. It takes its name from one Paul Dushman, who was chieftain in the fifteenth century.

Suma.—A largely Catholic tribe on the right bank of the Kiri. All these are included in the Diocese of Pulati.

Mirdita.

The largest and most important tribe of all. It is wholly Catholic, and has an independent ecclesiastical head, the Abbot of Mirdita; and an hereditary Prince of the whole tribe, Prenk Biba, called Prenk Pas. It consists of five *bariaks*.

Of these three, Oroshi, Spachi, and Kushneni, trace origin from the original ancestor who fled from Rashia. (See Shala, *ante.*) They are therefore consanguineous and not intermarriageable. Nor do they marry Shala or Shoshi. They marry chiefly Kthela and Luria.

The fourth *bariak*, Fandi, belonged to the Ljuma group, but left it when Ljuma turned Moslem and joined Mirdita. The fifth *bariak* Dibri (not to be confounded with the Moslem Debra of the Ljum group) is also of another stock. These two *bariaks* are therefore marriageable with the first three.

Mirdita in all reckons 3,000 houses, with an average of ten souls to a house. The three first *bariaks* state that the Pestriku mountains were their original home.

Kthela.

With Mirdita in war marches Kthela. Mirdita and Kthela have the right to lead in all wars with the south. Hoti leads in all wars with the north. Kthela is a large tribe of three *bariaks*:—Kthela, all Catholic; Selati and Pelati, both mixed. Mohammedanism is spreading.

Moslem Tribes.

The wholly Moslem tribes nearly all lie to the east of the large Christian tribes, and occupy the lower lying and more fertile lands where the mountains sweep down towards the plains. They are reluctant to admit strangers to their territories, and very suspicious of questions.

Debra Group.

I. *Luria*.—Is the head tribe of this group, one *bariak*, 200 houses. In twenty there are still some Christians. No house is entirely Christian, and Islam is making quick progress. When Christian (recently) it intermarried considerably with Mirdita. Now marries the two other tribes of the group, Matija and Debra.

II. *Matija*.—Wholly Moslem; I did not visit it. It is said to consist of 1,200 houses, and covers much land.

III. *Debra*.—All Moslem. I did not visit it. These three tribes are among the most independent of all.

It is noteworthy that Luria in the middle ages formed part of the Dukaghin principality, while Matija and Debra, it would appear, owed allegiance to Skenderbeg.

IV. *Arnji*.—A small independent Moslem tribe on the left bank of the River Mola. It is an offshoot from Berisha. Women wear Mirdita dress.

Prizren Group.

I. *Ljuma*.—A large and very independent Moslem tribe.

Along with it are grouped, Bruti, Mal i zi, Rechi, Vlas, and other small districts. They are all offshoots, so far as I could learn, of various Christian tribes, *e.g.*, Shala, Fandi, etc.

Djakova Group.

I. *Iashi*.—800 houses, all Moslem. Did not visit it.

II. *Tropopoja*.—300 houses, all Moslem.

III. *Hashi*.—Very large tribe vaguely reckoned at from 600 to 1,000 houses. Almost all Moslem. Occupies the Pestriku mountains which are the traditional home of the Mirdites (*q.v.*). Are not consanguineous with Mirdita.

Djakova and its immediate neighbourhood is almost entirely populated by offshoots from Berisha, Shala, Fandi, and Mirdita. These all recognise consanguinity with their mother tribe and do not intermarry with it.

Ipek Group.

This consists of Ipek, Gusinje, and Plava.

I. *Ipek*.—Albanian population from a number of stocks. In neighbourhood a number of Serb Orthodox villages. Also Albanian villages, some hailing from Shala and Berisha. At Dechani, the dark stock from Shala (*q.v.*).

II. *Gusinje*.—All Moslem except a small Serb Orthodox population. Gusinje has never been Catholic. Much of the Moslem population can speak Serb. Stock very mixed.

III. *Plava*.—I did not visit. Said to be of mixed stock, some from Hoti (*q.v.*), some from a very old stock called Pagani.

NOTE ON THE TRIBES CONSANGUINEOUS WITH HOTI.

I. *Krasnich*.—I could not visit this tribe, as it was badly at blood with all its neighbours, and objects also to all foreigners. It has a powerful chieftain, Shaban Benaku, who traces direct descent from Krasni the brother of Geg Laz, ancestor of Hoti. It is noteworthy that *Krasan* is Serb for "beautiful," *Krasnik*, "a handsome man," for the tribe stems from Bosnia. Also, that though now all Moslem Krasnich

men will go to the Serb Monastery Church of Dechani for holy bread, so do the Catholics of Nikaj who are consanguineous with Krasnich. A Scutari man, who managed once to penetrate Krasnich in disguise, told me the plot of a long ballad he heard sung there which struck him much. It is precisely the same as one published in Serb among the collected ballads of Bosnia.

II. *Piperi*.—In Montenegro, all Orthodox and Serbophone; did not throw in its lot with Montenegro till 1790.

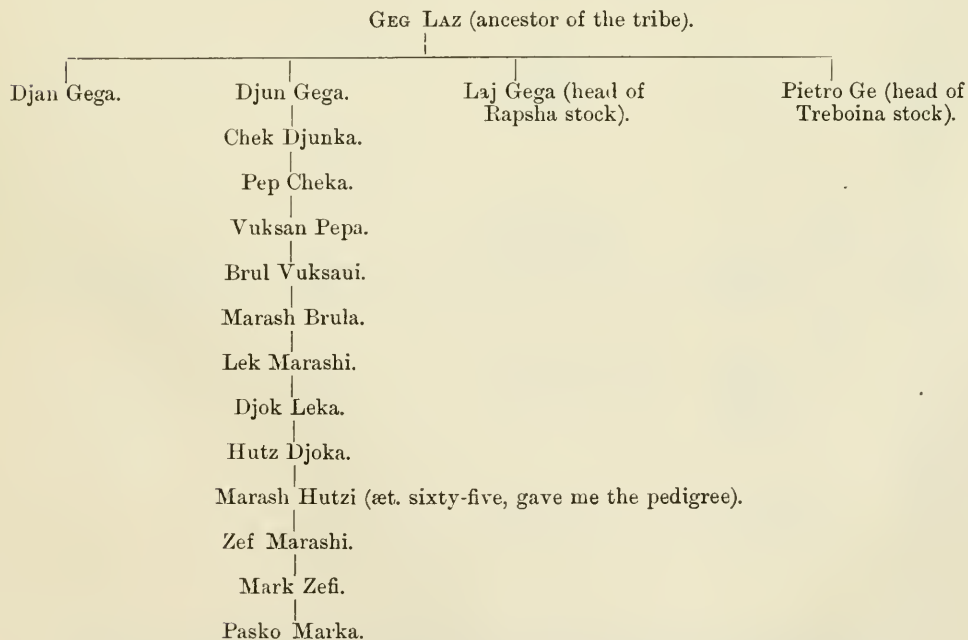
III. *Vasojevich*.—Is since the Treaty of Berlin half Montenegrin and half under Turkey. Is all Orthodox and Serbophone. It is noteworthy that in the Montenegrin part many Albanian proper names occur with Serb terminations, e.g., Dedich and Dedovich. Ded = Domenic in Albania.

Other Montenegrin tribes consanguineous with Albanian ones:—

Bijelo Pavlich.—One of the largest Montenegrin tribes, also joined Montenegro in 1790. It traces origin from Bijelo Pavlo (White Paul), one of the Dukaghins of Mirdita, known in Mirdita as *Pal i bardh*. The tribe is all Orthodox and Serbophone.

Kuchi.—Kuchi has been included in Montenegro since 1877. It fought on the Montenegrin side in the last war. One of its *bariaks*, Drekalovich, traces direct descent from Berisha in Albania. It is now, I believe, all Serbophone.

Example of a Pedigree from Hoti, High Albania.



Description of Illustration on p. 455.

- Fig. 1.—“Sun and moon” chair, Shela.
 „ 2.—Variant design of arm end.
 „ 3.—Cross-terminating in “suns,” Thethi.
 „ 4.—Series of common wooden crosses showing all stages of pattern.
 „ 5.—Wooden headpost and head and footposts of Moslem graves (Hashi and Puka).

Description of Plate XXXI.

- Fig. 1.—Nos. 1-7. Tattoos common among the Christians of the tribes of Malsia e madhe, N. Albania.
 „ 8-11. Common tattoos (Roman Catholic), Bugojno, Bosnia.
 „ 12-17. More elaborate examples from Jaju, Bosnia.
 „ 18-23. Bosnian tattoos collected by Dr. Truhieka—
 No. 18. The ear of corn.
 „ 19. “Ograda,” the palisade.
 „ 20. “Kolo,” the circle.
 „ 21. The moon.
 Nos. 22, 23. The cross.
 „ 2.—Gravestones in Roman Catholic graveyard, Dushmani, N. Albania (showing variants of cross, crescent, and sun—all recent).

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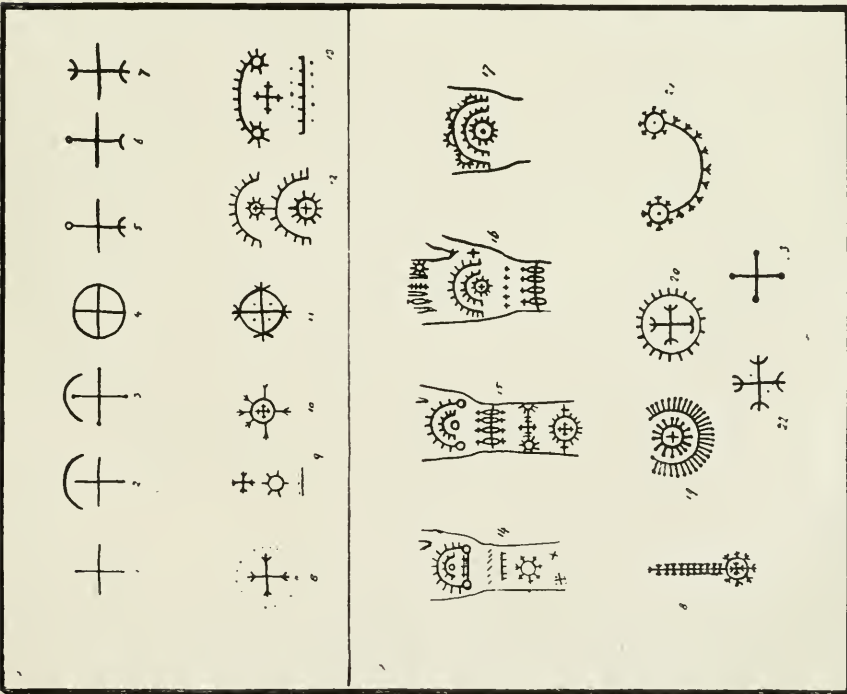


FIG. 1.

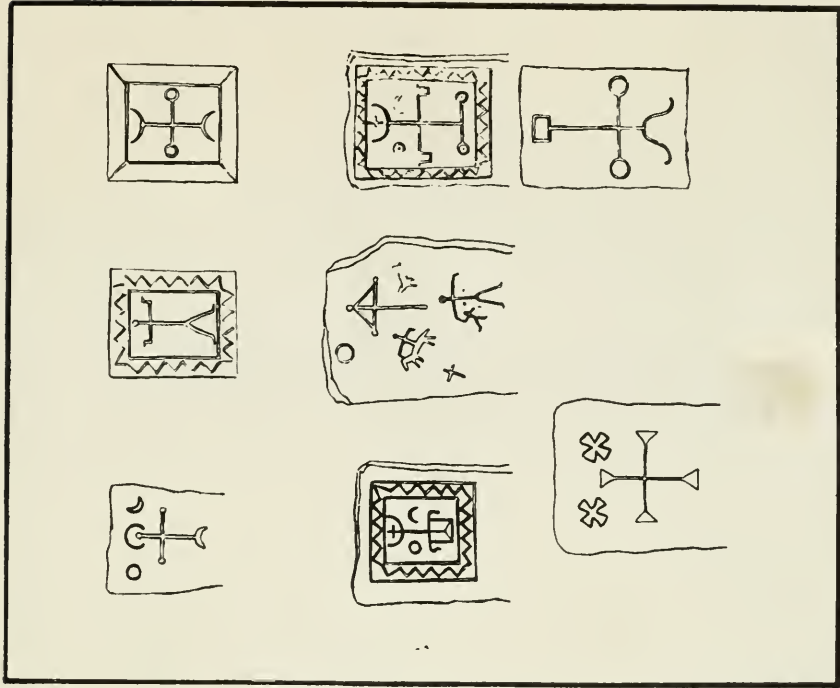


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